



North West Kent Family History Society

Annual Report 2018

Introduction

Tony Codling, Chair

What a year 2018 has been, the fortieth anniversary of the society.

At a time when many other societies are experiencing a drop in membership and are considering reducing services or putting up subscriptions our society has seen an increase in membership, which is now just over 1100, has frozen subscriptions since 2005 and is providing additional services.

All this is due to the exceptional volunteers, task-holders, branch committee members, trustees, our President and Vice Presidents that give their free time generously and are dedicated maintaining the success of the society.

The society invested in a new website, launched on the 5th March with a shop through which membership can be purchased, CD/DVD discs bought, pay for research and donations can be made. I am delighted to report how successful the website has been as in the first eight months 80 orders were fulfilled valued at £1130. The member's-only area (MOA) gives members access to some unique databases, all the quarterly back journals and other services.

If you have not signed in yet please give it a go as we are adding useful information to the website on a regular basis contact webmaster@nwkfhs.org.uk if you have any difficulties logging on.

The Family History Day and AGM on 14th April, at Farringtons School, Chislehurst, was very well attended with interesting talks by Ian Waller and Delia Taylor. A special 40th Anniversary cake was cut by three of our longest-serving members, with some of the cake being distributed to the branches so members that were unable to attend on the day could also enjoy the celebrations.

We were confronted with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) update in April. A sub-committee was formed to advise the society committee on the actions necessary to protect members' personal data and particular thanks go to our President David Cufley for his tremendous effort to ensure we fully comply.

As a result of the new website and data protection work we have amended our procedures document with the need to update the society constitution hence the item 16 on the agenda today asking for your approval.

For the third year running we had a great response to the photo competition for the 2019 society calendar which was available at branch meetings and the library from early September due to the generous donations towards the printing costs by some of our members it meant a reduced price of only £2.

At the year end members had raised over £170 for the society by buying items, they normally buy, on the internet using <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/nwkhfs> Please register and help raise much needed donations for your society.

Don't miss out on the latest news check out our Facebook, Flickr, Blog and Twitter pages. If you haven't already subscribed to the society twice monthly eNewsletter just email Stella Eames emailinfoservice@nwkhfs.org.uk and ask to be put on the circulation list.

There are always more things to do than resources available so why not help and give just a little of your time to help. Contact any one of the society officials or email me at chairman@nwkhfs.org.uk

The Treasurer's report

Pat Gooding, Treasurer

2018 has seen another successful year for the society with a healthy reserve and a small but significant surplus for the year.

For those new members who have not already gift-aided their subscriptions and are UK tax payers, could I please ask that you consider doing so. This is a valuable source of income for the society allowing us to claim £2.50 for every £10 subscribed. As in all walks of life the societies overheads are increasing year by year, however, the trustees continue to ensure that the society funds are spent in a prudent manner. Thank you for your support and generous donations in 2018.

Thanks go to the branch and library finance officers, membership and renewals secretaries and not forgetting the independent auditor.

Projects & Publications Committee

Barbara Phillips, Chair

2018 has been another busy and successful year. With the reviews undertaken over the last year or so, we have concentrated on completing outstanding work as well as looking at new projects.

We have managed to produce 25 new discs which include the Commonwealth War Graves Photograph Project between 2013-2016 – a huge task as many of you will remember!

We agreed with CWG that after the commemorations to mark the end of WW1 we would publish the CWG in our area on to discs. However, the Civilian War deaths are still not yet complete but hope to finalise these in 2019.

GDPR has also been time-consuming but the new regulations do not affect publications as much as the earlier 2015 Data Protection Act. We are still feeling the effects of this and will do so for some considerable time as we have to amend publications year by year until the dates comply.

Our on-line Sales with Genfair and Parish Chest continue to give us a small income (just over £400) but have now been far exceeded by orders to our own website shop.

Our arrangement with the online Data Provider 'Find My Past' has been successful this year generating approximately £1000 during 2018. Some 50,000 entries went on-line in December 2018/January 2019 which should benefit our income during 2019. There is additional data in the pipeline which will be submitted in 2019

We still have a great deal of further data that needs to be processed and published. We have a group of people who do a great deal of work in the preparation of publications and the Society thanks them for all their efforts. They include those who print images, transcribers, checkers and editors, without whom we could not function and for which we give our grateful thanks. As last year, however, we could still do with a few more editors.

As I have said many times before, the involvement of so many volunteers is a credit to the Society and I cannot thank them enough for all their help and support. Without them, we could not flourish as we do.

The Journal

Pauline Heathcote, Editor

Four issues of The Journal were published and circulated to members only. The 40th Anniversary of the Society was marked by the inclusion of articles reflecting the history of the Society. The March 2018 issue included the annual report of 2017. The December 2018 issue included membership renewal forms, a booking form for the Family History Day 2019.

Because so many members submit contribute articles and news, each Journal was well-filled with interesting and varied articles, alongside Society information. Many contributors continued to support the theme of the commemoration of World War 1. The March issue included details of the Josephine Birchenough Memorial Awards 2017 which, again, reflected the high standards maintained by contributors. More contributions are always welcome.

Thanks are due to the team that produce the Journal: to all contributors who share their expertise and family stories and to David Turner, who ensures Journal images are the best we can obtain. The team of proof readers, Sheila Beckett, David Bonner and Victor Nutt, worked hard to meet deadlines and to maintain our standards. The fourth proof reader, John Henderson, sadly passed away during the year; fortunately new volunteer Pauline Langley has joined the team. Spindrift Printers print and circulate the Journal promptly and also deserve our thanks.

Journals were exchanged with 35 Family History Societies; these were available at Dartford and Sevenoaks branch meetings. Bromley Branch is unable to store this collection between meetings. The number of exchanges has reduced this year as more Societies are only offering digital copies, and will reduce slightly as we cease to exchange with some organisations, that have proved to be of little interest to members.

The Society Library/Resource centre has been well supported by members during 2018 with 10 new members joining during the year and attendance up at 1471. Contributions to society accounts have exceeded £2200.

The workshops, organised by Victor Nutt, have been very popular, most having been fully booked. Many thanks to Victor for the enormous amounts of time and effort spent organising the workshops with over fifty booked for this year

Visiting members have been assisted by the library team of David Turner, Lorraine King, Pauline Heathcote, David Cufley Richard Flynn, Brian Kirk and others.

Postal research has been ably sorted by Lorraine King helped by others of the team. Thank to David Cufley for sorting out the finances, agendas and minutes each month and with a team cataloguing all donations of books into the library and managing to fit them into the smallest of spaces left. The library collection exceeds five thousand books, dozens of CDs, Microfiche and Microfilm all available to search on Wednesdays at Joydens Wood. Coffee, tea and light refreshments were available and donations were appreciated.

The library window display depicting a typical sitting room at the end of the First World War was admired by members, library staff and visitors. Thanks to Cliff Scottow for the loan of the fire surround and idea and donations from members. I think it can be said that 2018 was a successful year for the library

Bromley Branch

Isabel Leslie, Chair

2018 has been a memorable year in the life of NWKFHS.

We celebrated the 40th anniversary of our founding at the Society AGM in April, and then the Executive Committee supported Bromley Branch in hosting a special Branch Meeting in July, which commemorated the inaugural meeting, in Bromley, on 15 July 1978.

Our thanks go to David Cufley, our President, for an entertaining talk on changes in the field of FH research in the last 40 years.

In February 2018, Bromley Group launched our monthly Shortlands House Group, which takes its place alongside the long standing Beckenham House Group. The Shortlands Group now hosts up to ten members, with an open invitation to all members to attend on an ad-hoc basis should they have a special interest in any of the subjects being discussed.

We have taken the view that it is not viable to hold regular workshops within the Bromley area, but this requirement is now, in part, addressed by the Shortlands House Group.

Sadly, in our July Newsletter, we announced the passing of Angela Verrells, who had held the office of Chair Person in Bromley Branch for many years, and was a major contributor to NWKFHS transcribing projects.

The Branch attended a number of events during the year, assisting at Society and other organised fairs, talks and promotional events. The Upper Norwood Methodist Church offered us space again at the Crystal Palace Overground Festival in June, where we had an interesting day chatting to some 27 visitors to our stall. There are numerous small fairs and craft shows in our area, and the Bromley Committee plan to attend more of these events; weather permitting.

Attendance this year has decreased slightly from 2017. However, once the low count for March is taken into account (very heavy snow), the numbers compare more favourably with last year's. Since October, we have enrolled 3 new members, which is very pleasing, and it is hoped that they will become regular attendees.

This year we held an in-house Christmas Lunch after our November meeting, which, was very enjoyable and our Summer Lunch, held at the Bromley Court Hotel, was a resounding success, with many members and friends attending.

In conclusion, Bromley Branch is looking to move forward to building on the foundations established over the last 40 years.

Dartford Branch

Janet Rose, Chair

Dartford branch meetings have been well attended during 2018, the average attendance being 100.

The stalls, run by volunteers have been well-supported and have raised money for the society.

The varied programme of speakers has been enjoyed, different topics appealing to different members. Thanks to Barbara Phillips for organising the programme so successfully for very many years.

The Dartboard, our very informative monthly newsletter, compiled by Hilary Waters and printed by Sheila Elisak, has been a useful source of information for everyone. Hilary has also organised a guided tour of Gravesend for a group of members, culminating with a visit to the Sikh Temple which everyone found the amazing.

Forty members attended the delicious hot Christmas lunch, provided by a caterer, after our December meeting, during which the special raffle raised £150. Another £45 was raised for an army charity, instead of giving Christmas Cards.

Sadly five members have died during the year. Jean Evens, Colin Willeard, Reg Eagles & Robin Mooney Joan Goodwins. Sympathy cards were sent to families by Raymer Lofts, as were cards for special anniversaries or birthday cards. Lorraine King is responsible for sorting the meeting hall on Saturdays and it is due to the Dartford Committee and members running the various stalls at meetings, that the branch meetings are so successful.

Thank you to everyone who contributes to the success of Dartford Branch.

As usual I will start with my thanks to all the committee. They are an excellent team who all work very hard behind the scenes to keep the branch running smoothly.

Regrettably attendance continues to be disappointing with no obvious reason especially as most of the speakers have been very well-known and received.

We held an indoor street party at our November meeting to commemorate the end of WW1. This proved to be very popular with our members, friends, family and visitors from the other two Branches and we did have a satisfyingly large attendance for the evening there was such a diversity of food, including sardine and tomato paste sandwiches, fatless fruit cake and economy bread pudding to name but a few. Our master of ceremonies was amazing he took over the evening completely with his short talk on "as things were then and now" followed by rather raucous community singing. The raffle continued to be a great success thanks to the generosity of members and Barbara Stead who made sure the table looks interesting every month.

We are on the move in the spring 2019.

Sadly we have been given the date of closure for the community centre renovations. The halls will be closed for at least eighteen months so our last meeting here will be in May2019. Other venues are currently being assessed.

Publicity and Marketing Committee**Mike Weeks, Chair**

The members of the marketing team Stella Eames, Fran Rogers, Victor Nutt and myself have been working hard during 2018 carried out several talks to local organisations, workshops at the library plus of course the issue of the informative bi monthly email service and Facebook group.

In addition an article publicising the Society appeared in Family Tree magazine and a special leaflet was prepared for the Rootstech convention held in Salt Lake City, USA.

Our 40th anniversary provided an opportunity to showcase the Society in local papers and we made the front pages of the Bromley Times and Bromley Borough News as well as slots in the News Shopper and Gravesend Reporter.

More housegroups have started including one concentrating on DNA which has been so successful that a second DNA group is in the process of forming.

Despite the Society incorporating the Tunbridge Wells FHS in 2017 it has proved difficult to increase our involvement in this area and I would welcome both the assistance of volunteers who have personal knowledge of the area plus information as to how and where we can spread the Society word to attract potential members.

As we proceed into 2019 the focus has to be on using all the technological platforms at our disposal, exploiting all free forms of publicity whilst not forgetting face to face contact in the community.

The society committee would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Barbara Attwaters for the tremendous service that she has provided over many years by promoting the society at FH events far and wide. She has been trying over the last year to pass on her experience to someone else willing to take on the role but unfortunately without success.

Whilst events local to our branches will be covered by branch members we have a vacancy for events co-ordination to control events further afield usually large national fairs concentrating on family historians.

Many FH societies attend these events and we would like to have a presence but without volunteers offering to travel and set up our stall we are missing out on the opportunity to promote the society outside our area.

If you are interested please talk to Barbara Attwaters and she will explain what is involved and like all our volunteer roles we can adjust the job requirements to suit the individual.

Ends